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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### COALITION POLITICS IN INDIA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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#### ABSTRACT

The study highlights the concept of coalition government and its impact in Indian government and politics of parliamentary democracy. It also reveals the reasons and circumstances in which coalition governments in India have become regular feature both at federal level as well as in the states. Furthermore, the study explores the nature, character and dominance of Indian National Congress (INC) and its replacement by non-Congress coalitions both at centre and in the states. It highlights brief working of minority coalitions at federal level which no doubt proved short-lived and instable, however opened a new coalition chapter in Indian political history. However, Indian politics experienced durable, mature and stable coalitions in the form of National Democratic Alliance-I and United Progressive Alliance-I at Union Level. Both these coalition governments though experienced tough political weather but successfully steered the coalition wagon to a predetermined destination. The study concludes that those coalition governments survive without any hiccups which followed a path of compromise, consensus and cooperation in place of strict ideological adherence of coalition partners.

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## INTRODUCTION

The term 'coalition' is a Latin word which means to grow together. In the political system, it implies that some political parties will come together and form an alliance or temporary union to exercise political control. The Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences Professor A. Ogg defines coalition as a 'co-operative arrangement under which distinct political parties and members of such parties unite to form a government or Ministry sequel to the inability of a single party to command the majority in the legislature. According to the Oxford English dictionary word coalition means an alliance for combined action of distinct Parties persons or state without permanent incorporation into one. According to the new Universal Encyclopedia, coalition refers to ministry composed of members of two or more political parties of different views joining together for some common purposes. In a last word, coalition, politics means such a process of fighting in election, forming government and conducting governance where many political Parties in form of alliance come in power. The very first election held in India in the year 1951-52 was a milestone – a rise in the darknesstime for a country that many western commentators were influenced to describe so.

The 1977 elections were significant in the history of electoral politics in India. Democracy was retained by the Indian public and public confidence in Indian democracy also boosted up. people's choice. In the history of Independent India, the first coalition of non-Congress was formed in early 1977, also known as Janata Party, which the present BJP is in partnership with a certain Jana Sangh. The second phase of coalition began in the federal level around 1990 without BJP leadership, but the latter emerged as the single largest party in May 1996 election, and it took power for only 13 days with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as Prime Minister. The study period is mainly focused between 1990 and 2004 in which maximum experiments were done with the Indian coalition. Although, the governments in the post-2004 era were also an alliance of political parties having no match in programme and ideology, and they were united against the BJP, which again returned in May 2014 with Narendra Modi as their party leader and Prime Minister of the country. majority. But it cannot be denied that the 16th and 17th lok sabha is also a coalition as it is supported by a pre-alliance of the political parties. This paper focuses on the study of working of coalition governments in India. Indian polity witnessed coalition governments before independence due to various causes.

Though there is no mention of type of party system in India in the constitution. India is practicing multi-party system which resulted in the mushroom growth of national and regional political parties. Due to increase in the regional political parties, ideology conflict, leadership issues, region and regional issues and mainly because of lack of majority of single party there is an existence of coalition governments in India. Till 1999 there was no coalition which completed its term. The paper analyses about the different strategies adopted by the political parties and its challenges to complete the term.

### Objectives of the Study

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE

#### The study focused on the following

- To examine the history of coalition politics in India;
- To analyse the different aspects of social engineering essential for coalition;
- To narrate the challenges of a coalition in Indian context;
- How and why coalition became a deciding factor;
- To indicate the recent trends in Indian coalition politics

## METHODOLOGY

**Methodology of the Study:** The research methodology in this study aims to explain the contexts of Indian polity particularly the period of the coalition. As the valuable materials on aspects of Indian coalition such as Indian polity, society, and party system are mostly descriptive, analytical, and theoretically ambiguous, the research used secondary sources such as books, journals, and newspapers to explain and analyze events leading to the phase of a coalition. In the course of the study, the main focus remained on different aspects and dimensions of the work, and therefore, excluding unsupported narrations.

**Emergence of Coalition Politics in India:** Generally coalition politics is emerged in a situation of a country when no political party, on its own can achieve absolute majority in the parliament or state Assembly after the end of an election. The process of coalition politics started in India from 1967. And over the years, it is resulting silent changes in the realm of India's politics. Though, in 1947, the interim government under the Prime minister ship of Jawaharlal Nehru was the first formal coalition consisting the congress, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasave etc. <sup>4</sup> After the fourth General election in 1947, there was a gradual shift from the pattern of one dominant Party rule. And in the course of time, an uneven politics Pattern was evolved. In the world scenario coalition politics started in England first when the Pitt the Elder in 1757, merged in the Whig aristocracy represented by Duke of New Castle.

**Features of Coalition politics:** The coalition politics in India is based on some distinct features of its own. They are the followings :

- Collapse of one party dominant system led to the emergence of coalition politics in India.

- The very basis of the coalition politics is regional parties. The experiences of few previous general elections (except-2014 general election) prove the fact true.
- Coalition politics comes into operation through either pre-poll alliance or through a post-poll alliance based on shared and agreed policies and programmes.
- Three specific coalition blocks appeared to be emerging in Indian Politics. BJP led NDA, Congress led UPA alliance and the third front, where the Left front stood its ground.
- In recent, a new tendency is to be seen informing coalition, e.g. the policy of 'no untouchability'. Diverse parties (both leftists and rightists) are coming together to form coalition keeping all their differences aside. For example RJD and JD (U) coalition in Bihar election in 2015 or the alliance of left front and congress (INC) in West Bengal assembly election in 2016 can be cited.

**Phases of coalition politics in India:** On the basis of the electoral history of India and the records of union government since independence, coalition politics can be divided into two phases.

**The phase of Minority government:** The demise of one Party dominant system has given birth to an era of coalition. With the decline of the Congress and in the absence of National alternative having a Country wide spread it was logical for the people to repose faith in different parties and groups some confined to region. Thus, a long phase of coalition politics began in India.

**And the phase of Dominant party System:** The first Phase upto 1989, a period of succeeding eight elections resulting in electoral majority for one Party and relatively stable government except for a period of 1967-1972. And the Second phase started with the election of 1989. Since then there have been nine governments at the centre, all of which have either been coalition governments or minority governments supported by other parties, which did not join the government. In this phase any government could be formed only with the participation or support of many regional parties. This applied to the National Front in 1989, United Front in 1996 and 1997, the NDA in 1997, BJP led coalition in 1998, NDA in 1999 and the UPA in 2004 and 2009.

**Reasons of its Emergence:** The following are the main reasons for the emergence of coalition politics in India.

**Gradual weakening of Indian National Congress:** Since the time of Indian Freedom movement, INC used to be the most powerful Party with people like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel and many others. But as years passed, it fell into the hands of corrupt and ineffective leadership skills. Though Indira Gandhi managed to re-establish congress's predominant position in politics yet there was a gradual shifting from the congress Party. In 1969 Congress was divided into congress(S) and Congress(O). The assassination- of Mrs. Gandhi and the again assassination of her succeeding Rajiv Gandhi led to the change in leadership of the Congress Party. Dominance of INC was challenged. Ultimately the defeat of the congress Party in the election of 1989 brought the coalition politics in front line at the centre.

**Inability to Represent India's Diversity:** No single political Party in India is able to represent the needs and aspirations of the people belonging in different caste, colour, groups and communities, which gave birth to multi party system.

**Multiparty system:** India is the country with double digit number of Political parties. Today there exist 8 national parties and 4 state Parties. As a result no national party is in a position to gain sufficient majority to form government without the support of state parties.

**Growing socio-economic, political and other tensions:** The growing political, social, economic and other regional tensions give rise to the emergence of different Parties which wielded varying influences in states. With in the course of time and uneven political pattern was evolved.

Waves of federalization, decentralization and widening people's Participation have made coalitions as the hallmark of Indian politics'.

**Multiculturalisms:** The present day coalition politics has blended within it self the richness of multiculturalism. Now citizenship is not all about getting certain political civil and economic rights. Now the question of identity cultural pluralism and group- differentiated right are the key concepts of India's citizenship. 'Body politik" must recognize such differences in our society which are the magnificent heritage of our history. And in effect, the rise of strong regional Parties which led to the regionalization of national Politics. More the regionalization of national politics, more the movement towards coalition politics.

And lastly, the spread of egalitarian political values, economic liberalization, market oriented society and heterogeneous social structure all these things led ultimately to the emergence of coalition politics in our country.

How is it affecting our national governance ?

An age old quotation goes that "two brains are powerful than one, But today India is facing problems of 'too/ many instead of 'two'. If we go through minutely the coalition politics in our country; then; we can find that our national governance is facing challenges in various wages. Coalition politics has tended to make the working of the governance of Indian more complex, problematic and even fluid.

**Problem of Instability:** When the question raises to the extent of government stability we are noticing it's volatile nature. That is why, we has to face four succeeding election in between the year 1996-1999. And we have experiences of the Janata Government of 85 days under the Prime Ministership of Morarji Desai or the Government of A.B. Vajpayee for 13 days.

**Economic Problems:** Following up the frequent elections, the next challenge to our national governance is economical burden. Because of the fact that, a huge amount of money is spent in each election. Say for example, about Rs. 900 crore were spent only on election in 1998. Which is certainly be a blow to our national economy.

**Blow to National Interest:** In some cases national interest are being undermined to certain state or regional interests. For example, we may say the ministry of railways, when Lalu Prasad Yadav was in charge of the railway ministry during UPA-1, he favoured his state more keeping national interest a side. Every party to the coalition attempts to assert it's own economic and other interests in the political process. The regional Parties emphasis on the development of their region instead of focusing on the development of the nation as a whole.

**Impact an centre-state Relations:** In the recent times, the centre-state relation is going through a rough phase due to coalition from of government. Increase in the vitality of state parties at the union level has led to the demand for state autonomy. The issue of Telengana is one which has affected the formation of coalition government at the centre. At the same time, the office of the Governor is at take. For example, recent whole sale removal, transfer and resignations of the Governors of Rajasthan Bihar, Tamilnadu or Punjab under UPA Government appointed by previous NDA Government.

**Corruption and Maladministration:** Experiences show it that politicians and leaders of various political parties join deliberately in a coalition government to win some portfolios, to protect black money or to save them selves from any kind of legal actions charged before. And a weak ministry with several coalition parties is naturally unable to take right actions as laws permit.

The UPA-1 Coalition government has been hounded by allegations of corruption and maladministration Manmohan Singh, India's prime minister has often been accused by money of turning a blind eye to these. Starting from Tollgate, Coal gate to 2G or Common Wealth scams what not happened in India in this era of coalition politics.

**Delay in taxing and making proper decisions:** In some cases central Government is unable to take firm and proper decisions as to keep promises made to it is alliance. For this, the rescue of black money or taking any affirmative actions against various scams and scandals is the policy of go slow. Generally, coalition government is less transparent and more ambiguous which naturally restrict the ability of government to take major reforms and critical decisions.

**Policy Paralysis:** The another impact of coalition politics on national government is policy paralysis . A weak Ministry with several coalition Parties falls to take policies following democratic ethos and spirit as enshrined in our Constitution. As there is power tearing and different views of different coalition Partners, policy making at the national level is limited in scope. There are so many bills and policies remaining in cold room due to lacked consensus among coalition partners. They can be cited Like Loke Pal Bill, women reservation Bill in the parliament, or bill regarding GST. Similarly, coalition politics is impeding in making various developmental schemes and progrmmes and in implementing welfare in assures across the country, In fact , electorate's aspirations takes a back seat in this era of coalition politics,

**Insecurity of coalition:** Coalition government has to face the blackmailing of some of its alliance coalition partner often put pressure on government to any excuse. During the period of Vajpayee's government AIADMK, Akali Dal, Indian National Lok Dal, Samata Dal etc. threatened to withdraw their supports from it.

**A Challenge to foreign Policy:** Coalition politics also effects our foreign policy. It moves national interest to back burner. Due to coalition compulsion, Prime Minister Manmohan Singha was compelled to cancel his visit to Srilanka or Teesta agreement did not come in to being due to the protest of Trinamool Congress in UPA-2 government.

Way to better tomorrow:

In fact, after considering all these challenges and drawbacks of the coalition politics in India, we may say that, coalition culture has not still developed in full phase in our soil. There is wide space to be considered it in all respects. Here I suggest some ways either to sustain coalition Politics or to get rid of it

- Public mandate must go in favour of a single Party. So that, government, can complete its as usual term unfaithfully.
- Coalition partners should support a government unconditionally. They do never entertains their own regional narrow interest in respect of national priorities.
- There should be ideological uniformity among coalition partners. Otherwise Coalition can exist no longer. Because of the fact that, without ideological uniformity, Political allegiance and integrity is very lose, that is why, withdrawing support on slight issues are well-known.
- People should be educated and well acquainted with the features and culture of coalition politics. So that, people can understand the compulsion of coalition politics in the context of democracy, development and participation.
- Narrow principles and populist strategies should not be used for the sake of sectarian politics, Caste, colour, language, religion, gander should be discouraged and chacked.
- Voting age may be increased if necessary, so that, more matured citizen can cast vote. For, maturity makes a man perfect in judging what is right and wrong or beneficial and harmful.
- And lastly, such laws may be passed by making provisions that no coalition Partner can withdraw its support before a certain time.

## CONCLUSION

Congress returned to the power in 1980 under Indira Gandhi, and later under Rajiv Gandhi as the 6th PM. However, the next general election of 1989 once again brought a coalition government under National Front, which lasted till 1991, with two Prime Ministers, the second one being supported by Congress. The 1991 election resulted in a Congress led stable minority government for five years. The next 11th parliament produced three Prime Ministers in two years and forced the country back to the polls in 1998. The first successful coalition government in India which completed the whole 5-year term was the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led National Democratic

Alliance with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as PM from 1999 to 2004. Then another coalition, Congress led United Progressive Alliance, consisting of 13 separate parties ruled India for two terms from 2004 to 2014 with Manmohan Singh as PM. However, in the 16th general election in May 2014, BJP secured majority on its own (first party to do so since 1984 election) and National Democratic Alliance again came into power, with Narendra Modi as Prime Minister and more. All though, coalition politics which India is witnessing almost three decades does not have good story, yet there is ample cause for its celebration gone are days of a single national Party claiming to serve the interests and aspirations of India, diverse groups, waves of federalization, decentralization and widening voters Participation have made coalitions the hallmark of Indian Politics. And to fulfill our dream of the policy of 'Make in India, Digital India, or 'skilled India, 8 we have to nourish and cherish coalition politics in such a way as the need of the hour can be addressed properly. Now coalition politics have been a harbinger for the spread of real democracy in India. Actually, in contemporary India, there is coalition politics in form of dormant state as one party has absolute mandate and predominance. Still now, no political party has the courage to shake off the coalition politics. And this is the sole way of our future politics.

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